

## A Conversation with Stephanie Brunet

Stephanie is a 20-year-old mother with two children—one is three years old and one is eight months old. She is currently part of a Young Parent Support Program which helps young parents receive their high school diploma and receive care for their children.

*How many hours of sleep do you get at night?*

About 7 or 8.

*How many times at night do you wake up?*

Three times.

*Are you the only one who gets up?*

No.

*What is the biggest challenge with your little girl?*

Her hair.

*Describe the challenge.*

It's hard to comb and take care of every day.

*What's the best thing about Shantica?*

She's funny. She comes up with things—she's really good at remembering things like the “hands in your pocket” commercial.

*What's the biggest challenge with the baby?*

When they're both crying and I can't get to both of them at the same time.

*How do you respond?*

Let one cry until I deal with the other one or have Shantica help me to get the other to stop crying.

*How old were you when you got pregnant?*

Sixteen.

*How did you feel about that?*

Angela Struyk

Scared and nervous. I wasn't sure I'd be able to handle it.

*Why did you decide to keep the baby?*

Because I don't really believe in abortion unless it's a life or death situation and I didn't think I'd be able to live with myself if I gave her up for adoption. At that time [the father] was supportive. He was there when I had Shantica—not when I had Isaiah.

*Had you counted on doing this alone?*

I figured I'd be doing it by myself.

*Describe your home support.*

[I get support from] the father, his mother and my brother.

*What was your life like when you got pregnant with Shantica?*

I had dropped out of school for a couple of months.

*Where were you living?*

By myself in an apartment.

*How did you make ends meet?*

[The father] had a good job.

*Describe your relationship with the father of your children.*

It's good—it has its days. It's had ups and downs in the past.

*What are your future goals?*

To finish high school and go to college to become a social worker.

*Why a social worker?*

Because I've been through so much in my life that I think I'd be able to help other people through what I know.

*Why do you think you're a good mother?*

Because I stay with my kids and don't go out to the bar every weekend like some other young parents.

*Do you think being a young mother is harder than moms more established in life?*

No. I think that you just gotta want to be a good mom, dad or parent.

*Do you miss being able to do teenage things?*

No. I was just getting into trouble anyway. And if I didn't have Shantica now I'd probably have been in jail then.

*Do you think people respect you as a young mother?*

I don't know. I don't think people treat me differently.

*Do you think there are good services available for pregnant teens or young mothers?*

I think this is a good program.

*Do you see many young mothers who you don't think do a good job?*

Yes.